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Security Council

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Letter dated 3 June 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to bring to the attention of the Security Council, yet again, the Ethiopian Government's continued invasion of Eritrea and the Eritrean Government's appeal for immediate action by the Council.

I enclose a Press Release issued this morning by our Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning Ethiopia's fresh major attack on our forces around Assab after we pulled them back more than 34 kms inside our border from their secure defensive positions at the Eritrean border with Ethiopia (Burrie) last Sunday.

The Council is aware that Eritrea has demonstrated its commitment to the OAU Framework Agreement and the Modalities for its implementation, which the United Nations Security Council has endorsed, and OAU implementation proposals based on them by fully complying with what was asked of it — the redeployment of its troops to pre 6 May 1998 positions — so that the peaceful delimitation and demarcation of the border may commence. Similar redeployment to pre 6 May 1998 positions is required of Ethiopia, but Ethiopia has defied these OAU and Security Council resolutions, as well as OAU implementation proposals which the Council has fully supported, and continues its invasion of Eritrea to greater heights. Despite its orchestrated pronouncements of withdrawal from western Eritrea, the Ethiopian Government still occupies the entire Eritrean region lying between the Mereb/Gash and Setit rivers all the way to the Sudanese border. Ethiopia also occupies and is constantly pushing to expand its occupation of undisputed Eritrean territories in all the other border areas Eritrea redeployed from. Thus, the Ethiopian regime has taken advantage of the redeployment made by Eritrea in fulfilment of President Bouteflika's recent request for immediate redeployment on the basis of stipulation in the OAU proposals.

There can be no further demonstration of Eritrea's commitment to a peaceful settlement of the conflict and of Ethiopia's agenda of subjugating Eritrea for its aggressive aims than their respective practices today. Any failure to see what is clearly there can only mean tacit complicity with Ethiopia's now naked designs against the sovereignty of Eritrea.

Your Excellencies, Ethiopia's invasion of Eritrea continues in direct contravention of the Charters of the OAU and the United Nations and international law, and in blatant disregard and defiance of OAU and United Nations Security Council calls and resolutions. To re-emphasize the point, the OAU has demanded —

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in its resolutions that are endorsed by the Council — that there be a return to pre 6 May positions by both Eritrea and Ethiopia to allow for the peaceful delimitation and demarcation of their common border. Eritrea has fulfilled this requirement; Ethiopia continues, contrary to its pronouncements, to prove its rejection and show its contempt for such a stipulation by not only occupying but also fighting to extend its control of undisputed Eritrean territory as the fresh attack on Eritrean forces around Assab demonstrates. The Eritrean Government hopes that the Security Council will oppose Ethiopia's naked aggression and give impetus to peace efforts of the OAU and its partners by taking firm action to expedite the implementation of what has been already demanded by the OAU and endorsed by the Council. Ethiopia's refusal to redeploy, the continuation, on the contrary, of its attacks on Eritrean forces inside undisputed Eritrean territory to extend the areas it controls, threatens to frustrate the ongoing peace talks in Algiers.

The Eritrean Government thus calls on the Security Council to:

1. Condemn Ethiopia's invasion of sovereign Eritrean territory;

2. Demand that Ethiopia immediately and unconditionally withdraw its forces of occupation from Eritrean territory back to 6 May 1998 positions;

3. Demand that Ethiopia commits itself to the full implementation of the OAU proposals it has confirmed its acceptance of to the OAU Chairman and the Security Council delegation that recently visited Ethiopia and Eritrea;

4. Take punitive action against Ethiopia until it fulfils these demands.

I should be grateful if you could have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Haile **Menkerios**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the letter dated 3 June 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Press Release (7:00 a.m. L.T.)

Ethiopia launches attack on Assab Front

The Ethiopian regime launched an all-out attack on the new Assab front today. The attack started at 3.30 a.m. this morning. Intense fighting was continuing at press time.

The Eritrean frontline at Assab is a new frontline set at 37 kms west of the port city. The original frontline was at Burrie, which is 71 kms from the port city, and at the established boundary between the two countries. But Eritrea redeployed to this new position in response to the express appeal of the OAU Chairman, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Eritrea completed redeployment to the new frontline last Sunday which was verified by the diplomatic community in Eritrea and the international press which visited the area on Tuesday, 30 May 2000.

Ethiopia's offensive on the Assab front deep into Eritrean sovereign territory demonstrates, once again, that the war it has launched has nothing to do with a border conflict. This is purely a war of invasion. It constitutes a fundamental breach of the OAU peace plan and a contemptuous act of betrayal to the OAU Chairman. Ethiopia's offensive on Assab also contravenes United Nations Security Council resolutions 1297 and 1298 which calls for the respect of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of both countries.

Eritrea calls upon the international community, and the OAU and its partners in particular, to condemn Ethiopia's war of invasion and the offensive that it has launched on the Assab front today to which Eritrea had redeployed in accordance with the OAU appeal.